



Sabira with Jehangir Palkiwala (left) and Pearl: wearing white to cover crimes of another colour

If the costumes are of delicate material, the situations are explosive, with Valmont the danger to women in Paris. Nobody escapes. Not even Cecile de Volanges (Binaifer Damania, doing her first play) who has returned from the convent and is due to marry soon. Enter Valmont. One fine day, he cons her into parting with her bedroom key and promptly lands up there the next night. By the time he is through with her, she has been initiated. The next day, she is relating her "first time" to Merteuil in a spate of tears and embarrassment, while Merteuil who is bored, tries to look concerned. "...I found it impossible to defend myself," Volanges says.

"Why was that? Did he tie you up?" asks Merteuil.

"No, no, but he has a way of putting things, you just can't think of an answer," says Cecile.

"Not even no?"

"I kept saying no all the time: but

somehow, that wasn't that I was doing. And in the end... I told him he could come back tonight." Silence.

The next scene with Volanges and Valmont together has her yearning for more. She is hungry, impatient. He proceeds to teach her the facts of life in more detail, caressing her, talking to her. "The first thing you must learn is that there is no necessity whatsoever, for haste ..." A few manoeuvres later, he tells her about her "maman... at one time, one of the most notorious women in Paris... more noted for her enthusiasm than her ability". Volanges is zapped. But he cuts it short appropriately with, "We can return to this subject later. During the intervals." The rest of Volange's education is left largely to the audience's imagination.

The beauty of the play lies in these constant suggestions, in and out of

bedrooms and parlours. Nothing is overt, yet everything is. That, in fact, is what makes *Deceptions* different from other plays on the Bombay stage. "Bombay theatre audiences were used to brilliant productions in the '60s and '70s, like *Maratsad*, *Arturo Ui*, *Equus*, *Waiting for Godot*, *Street Car Named Desire*. *Deceptions* provides an alternative to the B-grade escapist fare that currently rules the box office. Bombay deserves better," rules Pearl.

FOR PEARL, *Deceptions* is a "re-birth" in her career, which has been rich and varied. Over the last 42 years in theatre, she has been involved in a host of productions, beginning with the *Poison Party* (directed by Adi Marzban) and has never got off the boards since. There